

Zwischen dem Reich und Ostmitteleuropa: Die Beziehungen von Jagiellonen, Wettinern und Deutschem Orden (1386–1526).

By Stephan Flemmig.

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The present volume is one of the latest examples of a series of works that testify to the strong international interest in the Jagiellonian dynasty over the past two decades. Professor Stephan Flemmig of the University of Jena has been studying the neighboring polities of the Holy Roman Empire since the beginning of his academic career. In his dissertation,¹ he provided a comparative analysis of the cult of Bridget of Sweden (†1373) and Jadwiga of Poland (†1399), and some years later, he dedicated a monograph to the history of the mendicant orders in thirteenth and fourteenth-century Bohemia and Moravia.²

The Lithuanian–Polish Jagiellonian dynasty, the Wettins, who ruled Saxony and Thuringia, and the Teutonic Order are in the center of Flemmig’s monograph. It discusses the history of the diplomatic relations between these three actors, aiming at giving a full overview. Because of this claim for completeness, and because the volume covers a very long period of 140 years (1386–1526), the author assigned a difficult task to himself. His method, while not providing anything “unexpected”, required a huge effort: collecting the complete set of secondary literature, the edited and archival sources, and doing their analysis. The subject carries much potential, as the connection of the Teutonic Order and the Kingdom of Poland, not independent of the bloody conflicts of the later periods, most importantly of those in the twentieth century, has always been in the forefront of both German and in Polish medieval scholarship. As it is the case with other ruling dynasties in the Holy Roman Empire,

1 Flemmig, *Hagiographie und Kulturtransfer: Birgitta von Schweden und Hedwig von Polen*.

2 Flemmig, *Die Bettelorden im hochmittelalterlichen Böhmen und Mähren (1226–1346)*.

research into the Wettin family, who amongst others, held the title of Electorate of Saxony, also has a long tradition. However, their eastern, most importantly Polish, and Teutonic connections in the late medieval period have not been subject to an in-depth analysis.

The first chapter of Flemmig's book provides a brief overview of the international politics of the period, or more precisely, the state of the art in Western and Central European national historiographies. The author then discusses the situation concerning sources, the actors with international contacts, and the different forms of their written and personal communication. The study of the history of diplomacy in the past decade or two has received a new impetus, and because of the abundance of new studies it would be unfair to blame the author for not considering particular recent titles. Nonetheless, taking note of communication history and other approaches of the so-called New Diplomatic History and their possible application would have been helpful.

After the introductory chapter, Flemmig does not discuss the events in thematic blocs but in a chronological order, fitting the chapter structure to the chronology of the Polish–Lithuanian rulers. This fact and the temporal scope of the analysis of the monograph (1386 and 1526) may confirm the impression that what we are holding in our hands is a Jagiello-focused monograph. This however does not mean that the chapters are not balanced in discussing the Jagiellonian–Teutonic–Wettin relations. The author is always keen on providing the contexts in the form of short subchapters.

Apart from the Polish–Lithuanian “core areas” ruled by Casimir IV, from 1471, it included Bohemia, but from 1490 the Jagiellonian dynasty also laid their hands on the Kingdom of Hungary, and from 1498 to 1510 a member of the Wettin family was the grand master of the Teutonic Order. All these factors led to the broadening of the research horizon, which up to 1471—with some exaggeration—followed one or two threads, and the more and more meticulous description of the topic based on an increasing amount of sources. For this reason, it would have been fully acceptable if the author had begun his enquiry with the year 1466 or 1471, that is from the Second Peace of Thorn concluded between Casimir IV and the Teutonic Order (1466), or from the ascension of his son Vladislaus to the throne of Bohemia (1471).

In the cavalcade of topics—meaning mostly the period starting with the reign of Sigismund I the Old in 1506—the author sometimes fails to keep a strict order, therefore the penultimate chapter is not an easy read. Nonetheless, we have a whole spectrum of international relations unfolding in front of our eyes. We encounter issues of vassalage, border conflicts just as much as the Ottoman threat or those of the recurrent conflicts with the Teutonic Order. But admittedly, the manyfold material that forms the basis of the entire book was probably very difficult to control. Therefore, it is to be welcomed that every chapter begins with a general introduction

that sketches an overall picture of the state of the Jagiellonians and the Wettins and ends with a summary of the most important findings.

Fortunately and understandably, in Flemmig's undertaking, a monograph of dynastic inspiration, the German–Polish viewpoint is not exclusive: Hungarian and Czech issues, and sometimes even “interior” policies are also discussed, reflecting mostly on Czech but occasionally also on Hungarian scholarship. These parts, especially those referring to the Kingdom of Hungary, are admittedly brief (pp. 33–34) though. Nonetheless, even in its present form, the volume is important not only for the “main audience”, that is Polish, Lithuanian, and German scholars, but is of great benefit also to those interested in the Kingdom of Bohemia and Hungary, especially during the Jagiellonian reign, because it offers well-founded and novel points in understanding the foreign policies of these kingdoms. As we expect of monographs that build on the historiographic traditions of different countries, Flemmig's book opens completely unknown worlds to the reader.

Bibliography

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